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DEMOCRITUS AND THE ORIGINS OF MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

The fragments of Democritus constitute the most important body of material for the history of philosophical ethics and psychology before the dialogues of Plato. This fact has not received the attention it deserves, largely because interest in Democritus has focused on his physical doctrines. The physical theory is known to us from Aristotle and the doxography, but the fragments themselves speak primarily about matters of conduct, moral psychology, and the conditions of happiness. Now of pre-Platonic philosophers whose written work has reached us, only Heraclitus and Democritus deal with such themes. We have every reason to believe that Socrates did so too, but there is no pre-Platonic documentation for his views. Of course, we also have ethical and psychological comments in the works of fifth century orators, poets, and historians and in the occasional words of a sophist such as Antiphon arguing that justice is not advantageous. But before the dialogues of Plato, the only substantial texts dealing with ethics and psychology from a speculative or philosophical point of view, and hence the oldest documents in the history of moral philosophy properly speaking, are the fragments of Heraclitus and Democritus.

The utterances of the dark Ephesian are unquestionably superb, but they are brief, enigmatic, and chronologically remote. Democritus is a contemporary of Socrates, and his literary remains are considerably more abundant than those of any other fifth century philosopher. They provide us with our best evidence for the level that had been reached by moral reflection in the lifetime of Socrates. They permit us to imagine the kind of thing Socrates himself might have said; hence their study will be useful for reconstructing the background for Plato's own work. Even if Plato had not read the books from which these quotations are taken (which seems to me most unlikely), they faithfully reflect, in a way the dialogues cannot do, the climate of opinion within which Plato's ideas took shape and which he could take for granted as the starting point for his own work.

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What I propose, then, is to exploit these texts as a documentary source for moral psychology in the age of Socrates. In order to keep the issue of documentation in sharp focus, I must largely ignore the figure of Socrates himself. We can study connections between Heraclitus and Democritus, between Democritus and Plato, and even between Democritus and Epicurus on the firm basis of a comparison between texts written by the philosopher himself. But in the case of Socrates, we have neither his own words nor any reliable fifth century report. Once we begin to use fourth century texts (i.e., Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle) as the the basis for a comparison between Socrates and Democritus, we take our stand on slippery ground. For we must then somehow settle by conjecture the question how far our fourth century source is literally faithful to his fifth century subject, and there is no way to check such a conjecture. So I will leave untouched the issue of whether Socrates influenced Democritus, or conversely. I am inclined to believe that they are quite independent of one another, but I would not know how to argue this point.

Before we consider the texts, there is a word to be said about the nature of the evidence. The documentation concerning Democritus is unlike that for any other early thinker. Plato never mentions his name.[1] Aristotle and Theophrastus discuss his physical doctrines at length but are silent concerning his moral philosophy.[2] Only the Hellenistic doxography, reflected in Cicero, Arius Didymus, Diogenes, and Clement (DK A 169, 167, 1.45, B4), offers a brief summary of what is there construed as his theory of the *telos* or ultimate goal of human life. On the other hand, very few of the nearly 300 surviving fragments deal with physical theory at all; the vast majority discuss topics in ethics and moral psychology. This anomalous situation is further complicated by the fact that 86 brief quotations are preserved in a collection attributed not to Democritus but to "Demokrates." More than one-third of these quotations are found also in Stobaeus, where they are cited under the name of Democritus. Stobaeus is our only source for another 100 fragments on moral psychology, including some that are recognized as inauthentic.[3] All this

[1]Some scholars have concluded that Plato's silence bespeaks ignorance. Diogenes Laertius (IX.40 = DK 68.A 1) assumes that it is deliberate, and I think he must be right.

[2]The silence of Theophrastus is easy to understand, since his doxography deals only with natural philosophy. Aristotle's attitude is more puzzling, given his great interest in Democritus' physical theory. Apparently he found the ethical writings not to his taste, perhaps because they seemed so wholly superseded by Plato's dialogues.

[3]See Stobaeus IV.41, 59 (cited in DK after B 288) and IV.50, 80–81 (after B 296).

gives grounds for suspicion, and some scholars (most recently Guthrie[4]) have expressed doubts about both collections. The problem is too complex for a full discussion here, and I can only briefly state my conclusions.

1. The bulk of the Stobaeus fragments, including all of the longer quotations (with the possible exception of B 297, on which I suspend judgment), seem to me clearly genuine. This judgment is based in the first instance on a sense for Democritus' style after many re-readings of the fragments, together with a feeling for what fits into the conceptual climate of the late fifth century. Although this judgment is inevitably subjective, it seems to be shared by most (not all) of the scholars who have spent much time with the fragments. And the stylistic judgment can be confirmed by two more objective criteria: (a) the use made of Heraclitean phrases in B 171 and B 236, the significance of which will be discussed below, and (b) the echoes of Democritus in the writings of Epicurus. It turns out that in his ethics Epicurus is scarcely less dependent on Democritus than in his physics. In at least one case there is a striking verbal parallel: βραχέα σοφῷ τύχη παρεμπίπτει in Epicurus *Kyria Doxa* 16 is directly modeled on βαιὰ φρονήσει τύχη μάχεται in Democritus B 119.[5] And in many cases there is a close coincidence of thought.[6] These parallels have been much discussed, and it is generally agreed that they are to be explained by the influence of Democritus' work on Epicurus.[7] In this respect we have excellent evidence for the authenticity of about a dozen fragments from the Stobaeus collection.

[4]W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, II (Cambridge 1965) 489-92. Guthrie's skepticism has not been generally followed. See recently David B. Claus, *Toward the Soul* (Yale 1981) 142-48, and J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford 1982) 27 f. For an early expression of more moderate skepticism, see H. von Arnim's review of Natorp's *Die Ethika des Demokritos* in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (1894) 881-90, who is rightly suspicious of the Demokrates collection (p. 887), but recognizes that the Stobaeus collection contains some material whose authenticity is much better established (pp. 884, 886). For a full review of the scholarship on authenticity down to 1948, see W. Schmid and O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* VII, I.5, pp. 251-53.

[5]This was seen long ago by Usener in his *Epicurea* (1881) 396; cf. Diels' citation of B 119. Note that B 119 is quoted not only by Dionysios but also by Stobaeus; Stobaeus' text is fuller and more accurate.

[6]For examples compare B 174 and B 215 with Epicurus *K.D.* 17 and 34; B 176 with *Epist.* III.134; B 199 and 203 with fr. 496 Usener; B 223 with *Ep.* III.130, *K.D.* 15, 21 etc.; B 224 (and 202) with *Sent. Vat.* 35, fr. 204 Usener; B 234 with *S.V.* 65; B 246 with *Ep.* III.131, fr. 602 Usener, etc.; B 283 with fr. 202 Usener; B 284 with *S.V.* 68.

[7]See R. Philippson, "Demokrits Sittensprüche," *Hermes* 59 (1924) 367-419; P. von der Mühll, "Epikurs Κύριαι δόξαι und Demokrit," in *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften* (=

2. The situation is not the same for the shorter maxims, including most of those in the "Demokrates" collection. These are on the whole less convincing, both in style and content, and some of them seem clearly to be alien intrusions. Thus, B 45 ("He who does injustice is more miserable than he who suffers it"), B 49 ("It is hard to be ruled by one's inferior"), and B 73 ("Righteous eros desires the beautiful without hybris") strike me as too specifically Platonic to be authentic: one would have to suppose that Democritus had read not only the *Gorgias* but also the *Republic* and the *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*.[8] There seem to be no clear parallels to the "Demokrates" fragments in Epicurus, and the two Heraclitean echoes in these maxims have a mechanical quality that is quite unlike those in the Stobaeus collection.[9]

3. Since the suspicious Demokrates aphorisms B 49 and B 73 are among those which are also cited by Stobaeus, it seems clear that both collections are contaminated. On the other hand, many of the shorter maxims in both sets are simply summary statements of views more fully expressed in the longer quotations.[10] To this extent even the Demokrates collection contains authentic material. But it testifies to a process of simplification and adulteration that had already begun in the generally superior collection we find reflected in Stobaeus.[11]

Schweiz. Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft Heft 12, Basel 1975) 371-77; Diskin Clay, "Epicurus' Κύρια Δόξα XVII," *GRBS* 13 (1972) 60 f. I am grateful to Diskin Clay for calling my attention to these parallels.

[8]Of course, one might try to defend B 45, 49, and 73 by claiming that Democritus and Plato are independently preserving an opinion of the historical Socrates. But to embark on this kind of pseudohistorical conjecture is precisely to abandon the documentary approach that I am advocating here. In the case of Demokrates B 83, "The cause of wrongdoing (*hamartia*) is ignorance of what is better," the Socratic-Platonic influence is obvious; and the doctrine seems to contradict Democritus' own account of *akrasia* in B 234 (see below, p. 16).

[9]Demokrates B 64 (πολλοὶ πολυμαθέες νοῦν οὐκ ἔχουσιν) and B 65 (πολυνοΐην, οὐ πολυμαθίην ἀσκέειν χρή) represent feeble imitations of Heraclitus fr. 40 DK.

[10]Thus Demokrates B 84 is an abridgment of the important statements on self-respect, B 244 and 264. The clearest case of authentic material in "Demokrates" is B 36, which consists of two out of the three sentences that form B 187, one of Democritus' most distinctive comments on body and soul. Another plausible Demokrates text is B 98, ἑνὸς φιλίη ξυνετοῦ κρέσσων ἀξυνέτων πάντων, where a Heraclitean thought is expressed in Heraclitean language. But in this case the thought is not original enough to guarantee its authenticity.

[11]Diskin Clay points out that the relationship of Epicurus' *Vatican Sayings* to his *Kyriai Doxai* shows a similar process: the Vatican collection gives shorter, more diverse material, which in at least one case (*S. V.* 36) cannot be a quotation. How did the Democri-

4. It is normally only the longer fragments that permit us to recognize with some confidence the style and viewpoint of a fifth century author. Hence, with rare exceptions,[12] I shall use the shorter quotations only to support or clarify views that can be documented from the longer texts. Any interpretation that relies primarily or exclusively on brief maxims of the "Demokrates" type is bound to rest on shaky ground.[13]

Turning now to the fragments, I begin with a survey of the principal themes to be illustrated here:

1. Soul and body as a pair, with soul as superior.
2. The soul using the body as its instrument.
3. The soul as seat of happiness and suffering, reason and emotion, character and intelligence.
4. Psychic combat against pleasure or strong emotion, with action and decision determined by the factor that prevails.
5. Desire and pleasure as reciprocals. Desire itself conceived as a lack or need.
6. Reason and sense perception as distinct modes of cognition.

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tean collections originate? We do not know. P. von der Mühll was inclined to believe that Democritus himself composed a book of maxims (*hypothēkai*): see von der Mühll (note 7 above, p. 374), following Friedländer in *Hermes* 48 (1913) 603-16. Philippson (note 7 above, p. 409) thought of a disciple. More recently Zeph Stewart has suggested that the Cynics helped preserve and transform these collections. See "Democritus and the Cynics" in *HSPh* 63 (1958) 179-91. But Stewart also recognizes that some of Stobaeus' material has come to him "through another and better protected excerpting tradition" (p. 191, n. 44). For a different view of the tradition, see S. Luria, "Zur Frage der materialistischen Begründung der Ethik bei Demokrit," *Deutsche Akademie Berlin, Altertumswissenschaft* 44 (1964) 4.

[12]E.g., B 188 is confirmed by the quotation in Clement (B 4); B 171 and 236 are authenticated by their use of Heraclitus. B 158 is in an entirely different category, since it is not an anthology maxim but a blended quotation in Plutarch; and here again we have a Heraclitean echo.

[13]This seems to me to undermine some of the principal conclusions in Vlastos' brilliant reconstruction in "Ethics and Physics in Democritus," *PhR* 54 (1945) 578-92, and 55 (1946) 53-64. See, for example, his heavy reliance there (1945, pp. 587-92) on B 74 ("Accept nothing pleasant, unless it is beneficial") and B 69 ("For human beings what is good and true is the same for all; what is pleasant is different for different people"), both from the Demokrates collection and unparalleled in the longer fragments. Similar scruples arise for the use of these maxims by C. C. W. Taylor, "Pleasure, Knowledge and Sensation in Democritus," *Phronesis* 12 (1967) 16 f. and 25 f.; and likewise in Gosling and Taylor (note 4 above, pp. 31 f. and 34 f.). In what follows, these works by Vlastos, Taylor, and Gosling and Taylor will be cited by the author's name alone. Similarly for Claus, *Toward the Soul* (cited in note 4 above).

7. Rational thought and emotion or desire as distinct principles of motivation.

8. Democritus' conception of virtue and the good life.

Except in connection with the last theme, I shall not be primarily concerned with Democritus' originality as a thinker, though I will touch on this point. My aim is to exploit the fragments as evidence for the general level reached by moral psychology in the age of Socrates. The issue of originality could be adequately dealt with only on the basis of a much fuller comparison with contemporary authors.

1. *Soul and body as a pair, with soul as superior*

Here there is no doubt that both the parallel and the contrast between body and soul are part of the common conceptual equipment of Democritus' generation: the evidence from Antiphon the orator, Lysias, and Gorgias is unambiguous.[14] And the view of the soul as in some sense superior is also common to other authors; after all, *psychē* connotes life, while *sōma* designates the corpse. What is more striking is the peculiar twist that Democritus gives to this superiority.

> B 187. It is fitting for men to take more account of the soul than of the body. For the perfection of soul corrects the inferior condition of the body. But strength of body without calculation (*logismos*) makes the soul no better.

Note the suggestion here that the excellence of the psyche lies in reasoning or prudence—in other words, that virtue is knowledge. But we are even more directly reminded of Socrates' insistence in the *Apology* that one should be concerned "neither for bodies nor for wealth before or to the same degree as making one's *psychē* as good as possible," since "excellence (*aretē*) is not produced from wealth, but from excellence men acquire wealth and all other goods."[15] The two texts are sufficiently differ-

[14]See, e.g., Gorgias *Helen* 1: "the adornment of body is beauty, of soul it is wisdom." Full documentation in Claus, ch. 4 (pp. 141 ff.). How old is this body-soul parallelism? With a different terminology it can be traced back as far as Xenophanes fr. 23: "one god . . . not similar to mortals in shape (*demas*) nor in thought (*noēma*)."

[15]*Ap.* 20B. Cf. Vlastos (1945) 580, with n. 16. Note that *aretē* (of the soul) in the *Apology* corresponds neatly to *teleotēs* and *ameinōn* (*psychē*), contrasted with *mochthēriē*, in B 187. For the general thought, see also *Protagoras* 313A ff., esp. 313A: "the psyche, on which all your affairs depend for turning out well or ill." There is a more rigorous development of the thought of B 187 in *Republic* X: "The evil (*ponēria*) of the body will not produce psychic evil in the soul" (610A5), where a Democritean premise is used in the proof of immortality!

ent for neither to count as a verbal echo of the other, but they agree in defending the greater importance of psychic excellence in terms of its causal priority: the soul is the source of other goods.

We have a much closer parallel to B 187 in *Republic* III, as Natorp noticed long ago. At the beginning of the discussion of gymnastics Socrates remarks: "It does not seem to me the case that, when a body is in good shape (*chrēston*), it will by its own excellence make the soul good; but on the contrary, a good soul renders by its excellence the body as good as possible" (403D). Here we have precisely the thought of B 187, and the resemblance is too close to be a chance coincidence. It is just possible that both authors are following a common source; the notion that intelligent living can preserve or restore health is a familiar enough idea in this period.[16] But the exact parallelism of negative and affirmative clauses is most naturally explained by the assumption that one author is echoing another, perhaps unconsciously. If B 187 is authentic, Plato must be the debtor here, and everything points in that direction. For B 187 expresses a crucial Democritean doctrine, the conception of the psyche as agent or guiding principle of the body. (See B 159, cited in the next section.) For Plato, on the other hand, the passage quoted from *Republic* III is a casual remark introduced solely to justify the more extensive treatment of music as training for the psyche. Plato will end this discussion by rejecting this contrast and insisting instead that gymnastics too aims to train the soul (410C–411E).

The notion that the soul rules or controls the body is always taken for granted by Plato and never argued for. (See, e.g., *Phaedo* 94B4–6.) One might suppose that it is an idea he got from Socrates; I want to suggest that he got it from Democritus: this is an idea Democritus had developed so systematically that Plato can take it for granted.[17] If it had been a specifically Socratic claim, he would have been *less* inclined to take it for granted. For his general practice is to argue for Socratic con-

[16]See Antiphon fr. 2 (cited below in note 17) and the medical literature on regimen.

[17]Democritus is developing a common view: "For all human beings the mind (*gnōmē*) leads the body both to health and disease and to all other things" (Antiphon fr. 2). But note that Antiphon does not mention the *psychē* here. I can find no pre-Platonic parallel to Democritus' systematic emphasis on the causal responsibility of the *psychē*. Where the soul is mentioned in connection with medical regimen, it tends to be the object, not the subject, of therapy. See Claus, pp. 150–53.

It is often assumed that Plato was ignorant of Democritus' work. As far as I can see, this assumption is based largely on an over-interpretation of B 116 (= D.L. IX.36): "I went to Athens, and no one knew me." (What Diogenes claims in this connection is that Democritus was unknown *to Socrates*, not to Plato!) I think the parallel between B 187 and *Rep.* III, 403D is enough by itself to prove this assumption false.

clusions from premises which his interlocutor is prepared to accept. I think that Democritus must be, behind the scenes, one of Plato's principal interlocutors in the early dialogues. As the major philosopher of the previous generation, he is in some respects an opponent against whom Socratic theses must be defended. But in other respects Democritus has decisively prepared the way for Plato's own restatement of the Socratic notion of soul tendance.

2. *The soul using the body as its instrument*

This is the moral equivalent of Democritus' physical doctrine, reported by Aristotle, that the psyche is the cause of motion in the body.[18] The fragments express this view only in moral terms.

> B 159 [from Plutarch]. If the body takes the soul to court, accusing it of all the pain and suffering of a lifetime, and he [sc. Democritus] is to be judge of the case, he would gladly find the soul guilty for having ruined the body with neglect and dissolved it with drunkenness, for having debauched and distracted it with sensual indulgence; just as the user of a tool (*organon*) or equipment in bad condition is held responsible for its reckless misuse.

The trial of the *psychē*, accused by the body of criminal neglect, is one of Democritus' more picturesque inventions, comparable to the dialogue between the senses and the mind (*phrēn*), from which we have the memorable line: "Poor mind, you overthrow us but you take your convictions from us: our overthrow is your fall" (B 125). The imagery of the lawcourt in B 159 parallels that of the wrestling match in B 125. The surprising note in the contrast between body and soul is that the psyche figures here as source of vice and corruption for the very same reason that it is the source of virtue and health in B 187: the soul is in charge of the body and must be held responsible. The causal relation here is precisely that expressed in Plato's doctrine that the soul rules the body, but by emphasizing the harm that the soul may cause, Democritus turns the point of this doctrine against the rather different view that we know from the *Phaedo* and elsewhere—that the body is (in Vlastos' phrase) a moral nuisance,

[18] *DA* 405ᵃ6-9, 405ᵃ10, 406ᵇ16, 20-22, etc. See DK A.101 and 104. As Vlastos points out (1945, p. 579, n. 9), Plato later adopts this view in his own definition of the soul as self-mover and source of motion (*Phaedrus* 245E). Unfortunately, I can find no clear trace of the physical doctrine in the fragments. B 191, which speaks of the *kinēseis* of soul, describes it only as moved (by extreme experiences), not as cause of motion.

the source of sensual indulgence and psychic pollution.[19] Now if B 159 preserves an authentic statement of Democritus, which seems to me certain, it cannot be directed against the *Phaedo*. Is it directed against the historical Socrates? Or, more plausibly, is it directed against some older, quasi-Orphic view of the body as tomb or prison of the soul?[20] We do not know. What we can recognize in B 159 is a negative attitude to the psyche which would be antipathetic to Plato. But we also recognize a view of the body as *organon*, the tool or instrument of the soul, which Plato and Aristotle can take for granted.[21] In Plato and Aristotle, the metaphor of the "tool" is faded or fading; in Democritus it is vivid and probably original.

The negative and (to speak anachronistically) anti-Platonic tendency is conspicuous in another fragment that focuses on a mind-body contrast.

> B 223. What the body (*skēnos*, habitation) requires is available to all without toil and trouble. What requires toil and trouble and makes life painful is not what the body longs for (*himeiretai*) but what (is desired by) the bad grasp[22] of the mind (*gnōmē*).

The personification of the body here as subject of desires is not strictly compatible with its role as passive instrument of the psyche. We will see that such inconsistency is typical for Democritus' references to desire. The term *gnōmē* here (for "mind," "thought," or "cognition") occurs where B 187 and 159 would lead us to expect *psychē*. I think it would be a mistake to regard the two terms as synonymous, though they may have been competitors in this period as expressions for the emerging notion of

[19]Vlastos (1945, p. 579), with references to Plato in n. 13. Note that this view is potentially inconsistent with the doctrine that the soul controls the body. In the *Republic*, Plato eliminates the inconsistency by transferring sensual appetite from the body to a distinct part of the psyche. The *Timaeus* attempts to reconcile both views by explaining the "mortal" aspects of the psyche as a consequence of its presence in the body (42A ff., 43A, etc.).

[20]Compare Democritus' designation of the body as *skēnos*, the tent or habitation (of the psyche). Whether or not this terminology is original with him, it is in any case justified by his physical doctrine. It also seems to be directed *against* any view of the body as tomb, prison, or place of exile. For Democritus, only in the body can the soul be at home.

[21]*Rep.* VI, 508B3: the eye as the most sun-like among "the *organa* for the senses"; so also *Theaet.* 184D4, 185A5, etc. Cf. Aristotle *DA* 412ᵃ28–ᵇ6 and Bonitz *Index* 521ᵇ31 ff.

[22]κακοθιγίη: "bad touch" or "contact"? Text and interpretation are uncertain.

a psychic center, "the core and carrier of the personality."[23] It was probably the Socratic-Platonic choice of *psychē* for this role that determined the terminology that remains standard to this day. But that choice was itself favored by the wide range of meanings for *psychē* in earlier usage, including manly spirit, subject of sensual gratification, and the principle of silent thought and prudent counsel.[24] The term *gnōmē* (from *gignōskō*, to recognize or know) was limited by its primarily cognitive or deliberative connotations. Democritus' usage is fluctuating, however, and in B 223 *gnōmē* seems to be a candidate for the same role that *psychē* plays in B 187 and 159. The issue is more than terminological. The precise relationship between the *psychē* as such and rational thought and planning (as designated by *gnōmē*) is one of the unresolved problems of Democritean psychology, and more generally of psychological thought before Plato. Aristotle says Democritus identified soul (*psychē*) and intellect (*nous*),[25] but that is misleading. It would be more accurate to say that he did not clearly distinguish the two, because he had no entirely consistent terminology for designating either one. (See further under topic 7.)

What Plato would find *most* antipathetic in Democritus is, of course, his materialism — that is, his view of the psyche as a purely corporeal constituent that is destroyed or dissipated with the death of the body. This view is abundantly documented in the testimonia but not directly expressed in the fragments (unless B 297 is authentic). It presumably underlies the statements about cognition that emphasize the extent to which our thought is dependent on corporeal factors.

> B 9. In truth, we know nothing exactly, but ⟨what we know is⟩ what changes about according to the disposition of the body and the things which enter ⟨the body⟩ and the things which press against it.

Here again we may wonder how this passivity of our cognition in regard to bodily changes is compatible with the causal initiative of the psyche in B 187 and 159. We do not know whether Democritus tried to reconcile these views or simply treated the psyche as active in decisions but passive

[23]Arthur W. H. Adkins, *From the Many to the One* (London 1970) 65, referring to *psychē*. In Antiphon fr. 2 (note 12 above), *gnōmē* designates the mind as source of planning and control, but in B 223 it is apparently responsible for desire as well.

[24]See Claus, ch. 2 passim.

[25]*DA* 404ᵃ28 (= DK A 101). As H. Langerbeck points out (Δόξις ἐπιρυσμίη, [Berlin 1935] = *Neue Philologische Untersuchungen* 10) 80, this is interpretation rather than report on Aristotle's part.

in cognition. It seems to be the same physiological psychology as in B 9 that underlies one of the most fascinating brief quotations.

> B 158 [from Plutarch]. As Democritus says, human beings think new thoughts every day (*nea eph' hēmerēi phroneontes*).

Here we have an unmistakable verbal echo of Heraclitus fr. 6 (Diels) "the sun is new every day"; and the context in Plutarch confirms some reference to the sun. But Democritus has combined this allusion with two other Heraclitean thoughts: (1) the river of restless change (Heraclitus frs. 12 and 91), and (2) the conception of our mental state as a reflection of our physical condition. Heraclitus had joined the mental with the physical in his statements that it is a "wet soul" that causes the drunken man to stumble (fr. 117), whereas the "dry soul is wisest and best" (fr. 118). Democritus' psychophysics is more complex: "our opinions are shaped by the formative flow from outside" (B7).[26] Hence the novelty of our thinking (*phronein*) is both a strength and a weakness. It keeps us in touch with the outside world, providing us with information and also (like Heraclitus' sun) with renewal and persistence; but it reveals the hopelessly partial and ephemeral character of our cognitive grasp. B 158 makes clear that the Heraclitean echoes in Democritus are no mere ornament of style but involve profound rethinking of Heraclitean ideas. This will be illustrated for the next two topics as well.

The discussion of B 9, 7, and 158 has led us from the theme of the soul's causal responsibility for the body to the rather different notion that mental phenomena depend on bodily processes. There need be no doctrinal inconsistency, since the psyche itself is a corporeal principle, composed like fire of spherical atoms (A 104). But in the absence of any detailed account of the mechanics of perceptual judgment and decision making, we must simply leave it an open question how far (or whether) Democritus tried to link up the psychophysiology of his theory of cognition with his discussion of moral psychology and action.

[26] ἐπιρυσμίη ἑκάστοισιν ἡ δόξις. I see no reason to doubt that Democritus intends both readings of ἐπιρυσμίη in B 7: (1) his own version of the Heraclitean "onflux" (cf. ἐπιρρεῖ in Heracl. fr. 12), and (2) the notion of "reshaping" our corporeal nature by cognitive experience. Compare διδαχὴ μεταρουσμοῦσα φυσιοποιεῖ in B 33. Taylor's insistence (p. 15) on separating the notion of "reshaping" from "restructuring" or "re-forming" does not do justice to the poetic richness of Democritus' language, which at this point resembles that of Heraclitus; but Taylor is probably correct in denying any *direct* reference in B 33 to the theory of the soul interpreted as an atomic cluster.

3. *The soul as seat of happiness and suffering, reason and emotion, character and intelligence*

B 171. Fortune (*eudaimoniē*) dwells not in flocks nor in gold; the psyche is the dwelling of the *daimōn*.

As the body is the habitation (*skēnos*) of the soul, so the soul in turn is the home of the *daimōn*, the divine power of happiness and misfortune. The last three words, ψυχὴ οἰκτήριον δαίμονος, are almost as richly suggestive as the formula of Heraclitus, which they are designed to recall: ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων (fr. 119), "man's character is his *daimōn*," his fortune for good or for evil. This echo of Heraclitus implies that for Democritus too the soul is the seat not only of happiness but also of character.[27] For both philosophers, this will be so because happiness and misery are themselves directly dependent on moral character and cognitive insight or the lack thereof.

Democritus' general doctrine is clear enough on this point, but to see how it is articulated in his conception of the psyche, we must pay close attention to the fragments. Again, his depiction of the role of the psyche is not wholly consistent. On the one hand, according to B 187 (p. 6) the excellence or perfection (*teleotēs*) of the soul will correct the defects of the body by reasoning or calculation—that is, by control of the vital motions in accordance with a rational understanding of what contributes to health and "cheerfulness" (*euthymiē*). The function of Democritus' moral aphorisms is precisely to provide such an understanding. They teach us that an excess or deficiency in pleasure or other intense experiences "will impose great movements upon the *psychē*," which is incompatible with its stability and cheerfulness (B 191). If one misdirects his mind (*gnōmē*) and thought (*dianoia*), he will fall prey to *pleonexia*, excessive desire, and "suffer harm in his soul" (*kakopathein tēi psychēi*, ibid.). Thus, in B 191 the psyche is the passive victim of emotion,[28] whereas in B 187 it was the active agent of control. This systematic inconsistency at the level of verbal imagery will be most naturally explained if we assume that Democritus (like Gorgias and other authors of the late

[27]For *ēthos* in the fragments, see B 192 and (in the Demokrates collection) B 57, 61, and 100. None of these texts is above suspicion, but the general conception is borne out by the longer fragments.

[28]Compare our passivity in cognition in B 9 (where there is no reference to the psyche): "In reality we know nothing certain, but only what changes according to the disposition of the body and what enters and what presses against (the body)."

fifth century) conceives the soul rather vaguely as the field or locus of what we recognize as distinct psychic factors, so that it can in different contexts be identified in turn with rational thought and guidance or with passive perception, with emotional experience, feeling, and one's overall "state of mind," or with the person himself as the subject of these states.[29]

I assume, then, that the daimon of B 171 which dwells in the psyche is the mental state of happiness or misery as this depends on one's character and rational understanding. But the language of the fragments does not suggest the notion of the psyche as a unified subject of experience, nor do we get any coherent picture of how the various psychic factors are related to one another. In this domain Democritus' language is expressive rather than analytical or explanatory. This is best illustrated by the long text of B 191, from which I have already quoted some phrases:

> Human beings acquire cheerfulness (*euthymiē*) by moderation in enjoyment and measured balance in their life. But deficiencies and excesses tend to change about ⟨into their opposites⟩ and to cause great movements in the soul. Souls that move over great intervals are neither stable nor cheerful. So one should keep one's mind (*gnōmē*) on what is possible and be satisfied with what is present and available, taking little heed of people who are envied and admired and not fixing one's attention (*dianoia*) upon them, but observe the lives of those who suffer and notice what they endure, so that what you presently have will appear great and enviable and you will no longer suffer evil in your soul by desiring more than you have. . . . ⟨One should⟩ compare one's life to those who are less fortunate and count oneself happy by considering what they suffer and how much better your own life is. If you hold fast to this frame of mind (*gnōmē*) you will live more cheerfully and drive not a few plagues (*kēres*) from your life: envy and jealousy and ill-will.

Besides anticipating a famous passage in Lucretius (II.1-6) on beholding the misfortunes of others, this text illustrates the practical acuteness of Democritus as a psychological observer and the lack of any theo-

[29]The use of *psychē* in fifth century poetry also permits the word to mean (according to context) sexual passion, courage, or simply "life"; see Claus (pp. 69-91). It is presumably this bewildering flexibility and not some unattested and inexplicable decline in ordinary usage that accounts for the avoidance of the term *psychē* by an austere author like Thucydides. (Contra Claus [p. 91], who speaks of the term's "being eliminated from common prose usage" in Herodotus and Thucydides. But in the first place we have no substantial evidence for *any* prose usage before Herodotus; and furthermore the evidence from Antiphon, Lysias, and Gorgias, as well as from Democritus [all cited by Claus (pp. 141 ff.)], shows that the term was freely used by some early prose authors.)

retical fixity or precision in his conception of the psyche. At one point he speaks of the soul as if it were the subject of the mental state: it is the psyche itself which is "neither stable nor cheerful." This phrase treats the psyche as simply equivalent to the human being, who is the proper subject of cheerfulness. But in the very same sentence the soul is also said to be "moved over great intervals," and these motions are "imposed" or "inflicted" on the soul by excesses or deficiencies of pleasure and desire.[30] It is obviously not the human being as such who is moved over great intervals by strong emotion. Thus, the psyche is also conceived as the passive or affective aspect of one's personality, one's mood or state of mind, where this is thought of as *acted upon* by the forces of pleasure and desire, themselves weakly personified as distinct agents acting as it were from outside. Similarly, in the last sentence of B 191, the emotions of envy, jealousy, and ill-will (*phthonos*, *zēlos*, *dysmenie*) are represented as evil powers or *kēres* to be driven from one's life. In this almost Homeric personification of psychic powers, the soul figures as a passive plaything, victimized or rescued by forces beyond its control.[31] So in B 290: "Expell by reason (*logismōi*) uncontrolled grief from ⟨your⟩ paralyzed psyche." Here the soul is numbed by sorrow, salvaged by reflection,[32] and both of these factors, as well as the psyche itself, are at least verbally distinct from the person to whom the command is addressed.

What these expressions show is not that Democritus has an inconsistent concept of the soul, but rather that his treatment of the psyche is not fully conceptualized. His description of mental phenomena has not reached the level of a psychological *theory*; he relies entirely on the shifting metaphors of quasi-poetic speech. Hence, in some contexts the psyche (or its excellence) can be identified with the person either as a rational agent, using his reason (*logismos*) to improve the body (B 187),

[30]I do not mean to rule out the possibility (urged by von Fritz and Vlastos) that the *kinēseis* of the soul are ultimately to be interpreted in terms of its atomic constitution. But there is nothing in the fragments on *psychē* that directly suggests or supports such an interpretation. The "stability" of one's life and character may be a reflection of the relative immobility of one's soul-atoms, but that is surely not the primary meaning of *eustathees* in B 191: the natural reading is in terms of lived experience, not psychophysics. We do not even know whether *kinēsis* is the term Democritus would have used for the motion of atoms (though he does use it for the movement of the waves in B 164).

[31]Compare B 285: human life is "feeble and brief and beset by many plagues (*kēres*) and difficulties."

[32]So in B 31: as medicine cures the body of disease, so wisdom frees the soul from passions (*pathē*), where the thought is Democritean, even if the language is not. (See note 49 below).

or as an irresponsible agent, damaging the body by his neglect (B 159).[33] In other contexts, as we have just seen, the psyche is not the agent or person himself but his emotional nature, which is moved by pleasure or numbed by grief (B 191, 290). Probably no thinker who attempts to describe our mental and emotional life can avoid such inconsistency in expression. But in Democritus there is no trace of any *attempt* to escape the limitations of this idiomatic phraseology, no effort to frame a coherent model for psychological description and explanation. This task remained for Plato to undertake. We can see the first step toward such a model in the passage of the *Gorgias* which speaks of "that part of the soul where the desires are located" (493A); but a full-scale model comes only with the tripartite psychology of the *Republic*. It is the merest beginnings of such an effort that can be recognized in Democritus' treatment of the next theme.

4. *Psychic combat against pleasure or strong emotion, where action and decision are determined by the factor that prevails*

Agonistic imagery runs all through the fragments, as in the wrestling match between mind and the senses (B 125) and the lawsuit between body and soul (B 159).[34] But for psychic conflict Democritus again takes his cue from Heraclitus.

> B 236. To fight against anger (*thymos*) is hard. But it is a man's task to conquer (*krateein*) if he has good sense (*eulogistos*).

Heraclitus had depicted *thymos* as a formidable opponent, "hard to fight against, for it buys what it wants at the expense of the psyche" (fr. 85 Diels). Whatever Heraclitus may have meant by *psychē* here, Democritus takes up the notion of courage or manliness (*andros de* . . .), which is one of the idiomatic connotations of *psychē*, reinforced here by the metaphor of combat. In his own version of the unity of the virtues, Democritus points out that courage depends not only on *thymos* (as in Plato's tripartite psychology) but also on prudence and good judgment.[35]

[33]So also in B 212 if (with DK) one construes ἀπαιδευσίῃ with ψυχῆς: it is lack of rational training on the soul's part that can account for unseasonable sleep.

[34]Cf. B 176: Nature, as the weaker but more reliable factor, prevails (*nikai*) over fortune.

[35]For the interdependence of courage, knowledge, and justice (*orthoprageein, euthygnōmos*), see B 181; for the connection of courage and temperance, see B 214, cited in the text. In B 179 *aretē* is said to be "held together" or supported (*synechein*) by a due sense of shame (*aideisthai*).

Implicitly, then, we have a combat between reason and passion. In B 236, passion is conceived, however, not in general but specifically as anger,[36] and reason is not articulated as a separate factor but included in the adjectival characterization of the man who acts (*anēr eulogistos*). (Contrast the appearance of *logismos* in substantival form in B 187 and 290.) So although Democritus has pursued the imagery of psychic conflict further than Heraclitus by referring to the victory of the stronger party, it is still a combat between the man and his emotion as a quasi-external opponent, not between two rival factors in the soul. The same holds for B 214:

> The brave man is he who prevails (*kreissōn*) not only over enemies but also over pleasures. There are some who are masters of cities but slaves to women.[37]

Here, instead of the manly force of anger, we have as psychic opponent the effeminate power of sensuality. This idea of being dominated by sensual pleasure brings us close to the classic notion of *akrasia*, lack of mastery over the impulse of pleasure and desire. This notion is made explicit in B 234:

> Men in their prayers ask for health from the gods; they do not know that they have the power for this in themselves. But because of a lack of mastery (*akrasiē*) they act on the enemy's side and themselves betray the cause of health to their desires (*epithymiai*).

In this case, the enemy is not pleasure as such but desires whose gratification will ruin one's health. (For the close conceptual tie between pleasure and desire see the next topic.) *Akrasia* consists precisely in being defeated by such desires, when it is in one's power to prevail. Democritus' point is that such a defeat occurs because the agent goes over to his opponent's side, by identifying himself with his desires.

Democritus' reference to *akrasia* reminds us of the vulgar account of "being defeated by pleasures" which Plato rejects in *Protagoras* 352D ff., but it differs from that account in two respects: (1) Democritus emphasizes the responsibility of the agent as an accomplice in his own de-

[36]For this interpretation of *thymos*, see *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 242, with n. 334 on p. 331.

[37]See the remark attributed to Sophocles in old age (Plato *Rep.* I, 329C): when someone asked him if he could still have intercourse with a woman, Sophocles replied, "Peace, man! I am glad to have escaped that, like someone who has run away from an insane and cruel master" (*despotēs*: cf. *despozousi, douleuousin* in Dem. B 214).

feat, and (2) he does not mention the point that is essential to Socrates: that the agent "knows what is best" but acts otherwise. On the contrary, says Democritus, such men "do not know that they have this power ⟨for health, i.e., for what is best⟩ in themselves." So Democritus does not actually describe the phenomenon that Socrates wishes to deny. On the contrary, he implies that such loss of mastery depends on a failure of understanding: wisdom should be able to rid the soul of its destructive passions (B 31). Thus, Democritus defends a position that is close to that of Socrates at the end of the *Protagoras*, although the role of reason is understood in quite different terms. (The fragments show no trace of a hedonistic calculus such as we find in the *Protagoras*. See under topic 8 below.)

In each of the three texts just discussed (B 236, 214, 234), the conflict is not between reason and passion but between the human agent and powers that assail him as it were from outside. Given these descriptions, it seems but a small step to recast the combat as a contest between rational and nonrational factors *within the psyche*. But that is precisely the step that will transform these vivid metaphors into a coherent psychological model. And I see no evidence of anyone's having taken this step before Plato.[38] Certainly Democritus did not.

5. *Desire and pleasure as reciprocal concepts; desire itself understood as a lack or need*

As noted, the combat with pleasures in B 214 is paralleled by the combat with desires in 234. This is characteristic of Democritus' use: desire is desire for pleasure; pleasure is (typically, if not exclusively) the gratification of desire. I assume that Democritus is not so much innovating here as reflecting the ordinary sense attached to these terms.[39] We recognize the conjunction or equivalence of *epithymia* and *hēdonē* that is taken for granted in the debate with Callicles in the *Gorgias*[40] and in

[38]The *appearance* of such a step can be given by the quasi-allegorical suggestion of a combat between good sense (*noos*) and anger or passion (*thymos*), as in Theognis 631 ᾧτινι μὴ θυμοῦ κρέσσων νόος, αἰὲν ἐν ἄταις. But here there is no reference to the psyche and hence no psychological model at all: *noos* and *thymos* are conceived simply as possessions or as intimate companions of the person in question.

[39]Compare the saying ascribed to Thales, "the sweetest thing is to get what you desire (*epithymeis*)," DK I, p. 64, n. 10, with parallels cited in *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p.182.

[40]See *Gorgias* 484D5; 491D12, E9-492A3, A7; 494A7, C2, etc.

Aristotle's definition of *epithymia* as "desire for pleasure." This connection between the concepts of pleasure and desire may seem to us the merest common sense. But common sense needs to be articulated before it can be incorporated into a psychological theory. Here again we find Democritus providing the articulation from which Plato and Aristotle will construct their theory.

This connection is illustrated in the longest discussion of sensual appetite, which also introduces the notion of desire as a lack.

> B 235. Those who derive their pleasures from the belly by exceeding a due measure in food or drink or sex, all these get pleasures that are brief and temporary, lasting only as long as they are eating and drinking; but the griefs they get are many. For this kind of desire is ever present for the same things; and when they get what they desire, the pleasure is quickly past and there is no good in these things except for the brief enjoyment. And then they feel the same needs again.

What Democritus classifies as "pleasures of the belly" are just what Plato and Aristotle will recognize as the basic appetites (*epithymiai*): hunger, thirst, and sex. Democritus' point is the grave disproportion between these desires and their gratification. Whereas the desires are permanent and recurrent, the corresponding pleasures are momentary and fleeting. So the pursuit of this kind of pleasure is doomed to frustration; we will have to satisfy the same desires again and again. Hence, moderation (*kairos*) is the only rational course. Democritus may be some sort of hedonist, since he recognizes joy and joylessness, *terpsis* and *aterpeia*, as marking the boundary between what is advantageous and disadvantageous (B 4 and 188). But he is no Callicles, avid for the maximal experience of desire and gratification. On the contrary, his insistence on the insatiable character of these appetites prefigures Socrates' allegory of filling the leaky jar with water from a sieve (*Gorgias* 493B).

Another fragment extends this analysis to the lust for riches, with a striking echo of Heraclitus.

> B 219. The desire (*orexis*) for wealth, unless it is limited by satisfaction (*koros*), is much harder to bear than extreme poverty. For greater desires produce greater needs.

The last five words reinstantiate the phonetic-syntactic pattern of a mysterious five-word aphorism of Heraclitus (fr. 25): "Greater dooms are allotted greater destinies" (with the same juxtaposition of *mezonas* . . . *mezones* in the center of the clause). Whether there is any contact with the thought of the Heraclitean aphorism is uncertain, since that frag-

ment is one of the darkest. But the characteristic use of Heraclitean phrasing in B 219 seems to guarantee its authenticity, which is important for two reasons: (1) this is the first attested occurrence of the noun *orexis*,[41] which is never used by Plato but which provides Aristotle with his generic term for desire; and (2) by correlating desire with lack or need (*endeia*), B 219 suggests the conception of desire as deficiency, with the corresponding notion of pleasure as the "fulfillment" of this lack. Democritus himself does not *have* a deficiency theory of pleasure and desire: desires are said here to produce needs, not to be produced by them. And satisfaction (*koros*) is not schematized as a filling up but allegorized as a kind of mythical person, marking off the boundary that sets limits to desire.

For completeness, I list in the Appendix all Democritean fragments dealing with the notion of desire. In these texts the general level of conceptualization is that of weak personification, as with the treatment of other psychic factors examined so far. Thus, intense desires are said to "blind the psyche" for other interests (B 72, in the Demokrates collection). Note that if this metaphor is taken literally, desires and psyche are conceived of as independent agents.

6. *Reason and sense perception as distinct modes of cognition*

Democritus' theory of knowledge lies beyond the scope of this paper, but some general grasp of his concept of the mind is required for understanding his moral psychology. B 11 (from Sextus), which draws the distinction between genuine (*gnēsiē*) and dark or spurious cognition (*skotiē gnōmē*), enumerates the dark kinds as "sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch." The nobler sort is "separate from this." Thus, Democritus recognizes the five special senses and a sixth, more refined mode of apprehension which is quite different and which we might call "thinking."[42] The fragments offer no general term for sense perception (other than "obscure *gnōmē*"); but the verb *aisthanesthai* does occur in the reference to touch in B 11, and the corresponding noun (*aisthēsis*) could

[41] With B 72 and 284, B 219 represents the only occurrence of the term *orexis* before Aristotle.

[42] I see no point in speculating (with Guthrie [note 4 above] 449-51) on what might lie behind the obscure doxographical report that Democritus recognized *more* than five senses "for irrational animals, wise men, and gods" (DK A 116). Aetius is too confused a source for us to have any hope of reconstructing the basis of such a report.

well have been used by Democritus in the great mass of his writing that has been lost.[43] Another quotation (from Galen) has the senses as a group addressing themselves to the mind or *phrēn*, presumably the organ of genuine *gnōmē*; "Poor *phrēn*, you overthrow us . . ." (B 125).[44] Galen paraphrases *phrēn* by *dianoia* "thought," a word that occurs elsewhere in the fragments as an equivalent of *gnōmē* (B 191; cf. *dianoeisthai* for mathematical thinking in B 155). Democritus thus anticipates, probably for the first time,[45] the classic distinction between sense perception and rational or nonsensory thought which both Plato and Aristotle can take for granted. It is, I suggest, the work of Democritus which permits Plato

[43]Langerbeck Δόξις ἐπιρυσμίη (note 25 above, p. 114) emphasizes that there is no generic term for sense perception in B 11, and wishes to deny that Democritus has made the epistemic distinction between perception and thought (p. 115). But he offers no alternative explanation either for the two kinds of *gnōmē* in B 11 or for the opposition between *phren* and "we others" in B 125.

[44]*Phrēn* is the term for a cognitive faculty or organ in B 125 and also in B 129: φρενὶ θεῖα νοῦνται. Its cognates signify practical wisdom: *phronēsis* in B 2, 119, 193; *phronein* in B 183. (Similarly in the Demokrates aphorisms B 42 and 58.) Because of the nature of the texts selected by the anthologers, most cognitive terms are attested primarily or exclusively in this practical sense, e.g., *nous* in B 175 and 282, *logismos* in B 187 and 290, *dianoia* in B 191. But the same vocabulary would presumably serve for theoretical reason when the occasion arose. Thus, *gnōmē* ("thought," "judgment," "mind," "state of mind") generally occurs in the fragments in connection with an emotional state or practical intent, but it also designates the two types of cognition in B 11. Similarly for *dianoia, dianoeisthai*, which is practical in B 191, theoretical in B 155. In B 129 *noeisthai* apparently refers to nonsensory cognition.

[45]The distinction may have been drawn by Leucippus, but we have no evidence for this. The roots go back to Parmenides, of course, who urges his reader to "behold beings with the mind (*noos*)" in fr. 4 and "to judge my proof by rational argument" (*logos*) in fr. 7.5. But the text of Parmenides' poem does not sharply distinguish the senses as Democritus does in B 11 and 125. Thus, in Parmenides fr. 7.5, the tongue stands not for taste but for talk, and *noos/noēma* applies indifferently to perception and thought (fr. 16). Anaxagoras (fr. 12) and Diogenes (fr. 5) explicitly assign *nous/noēsis* to animals as well as to humans; in effect, they identify sensation, cognition, and animal vitality. Empedocles is even more generous: for him "*all* things have a share in *phronēsis* and *nōma* (= *noēma*)" (fr. 110.10). It is not in such a context that we can expect a sharp differentiation between sensory and nonsensory cognition.

If Walter Burkert were correct in including Philolaus B 13 with the genuine fragments (B 1-7), we would have a clear anticipation of the Platonic distinction between *nous* and *aisthēsis* prior to Democritus, and with a terminological precision that has no parallel even in Democritus. See his *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (= *Weisheit und Wissenschaft*, transl. E. L. Minar, Jr.) 269-71. In view of the other pre-Socratic evidence just cited, this terminological isolation should cast some doubt on the authenticity of Philolaus B 13. And in my opinion the anatomical distribution of psychic functions in this text smacks suspiciously of the *Timaeus*.

to refer without a word of explanation to "seeing and hearing and the other senses" (*Phaedo* 75A-B) and to contrast this with a kind of knowledge that is radically different, whose object is accessible "only to the reasoning of thought" (*ho tēs dianoias logismos*, 79A3).[46] Plato and Democritus are both heirs to the epistemic dualism of Parmenides, but in different ways. Democritus can draw a rigorous distinction between two kinds of cognition because he has succeeded in separating the sense qualities as such, which exist only by custom (*nomos*), from the objects of genuine knowledge: atoms and the void, which exist in reality (B 9 = B 125). The identification of the sense qualities and the recognition of the senses as such go hand in hand, and in both cases Democritus seems to have been a pioneer.

7. *Rational thought and emotion or desire as distinct principles of motivation?*

We might expect to find Democritus drawing a distinction between reason and passion corresponding to his antithesis between reason and sense. Unfortunately, the conceptual development is not that straightforward, and the fact that it is not may itself be the most important insight that we can derive from a close study of the fragments. Like all later authors, Democritus uses the same terms for reason or intellect in its practical-prudential as in its theoretical-scientific application: for reason as the principle of intelligent behavior and for reason as the principle for knowing the truth about the world.[47] It is, of course, the practical sense of rationality—acting intelligently rather than foolishly, thoughtfully rather than recklessly—which is the older, more familiar notion and more abundantly attested in the fragments. The other, properly epistemic notion of reason is essentially a creation of the new science and a correlate of the philosophic distinctions between appearance and real-

[46]For *logismos* and *dianoia* in Democritus, see note 44 above. The parallel between vision and the eye of the mind (*gnōmē*) is common in late fifth century texts. See Antiphon B 1 with the Hippocratic passage cited by Diels ad loc. (*de arte* 2), where *gnōmēi noēsai* stands next to *ophthalmoisin idein*.

[47]See note 44 above on *gnōmē*, *dianoia*, and *logismos*. The fact that *logismos* is attested only in a practical sense is probably an accident of our documentation. It is interesting that *nous* (*anoia*, *anoēmōn*, etc.) also occurs in the fragments only for practical intelligence, whereas Plato and Aristotle will establish this as the standard term for the cognitive faculty, thus consecrating the union of the two concepts of reason.

ity, between traditional errors and true insight into the nature of things. It is, as we have seen, Democritus (following Parmenides and others) who first defines the epistemic concept of reason in a rigorous way by a sharp contrast with sense perception. But he still has no precise terminology for the new notion; he simply uses the terms that have traditionally been associated with rationality in the practical sphere: *phrēn*, *gnōmē*, *dianoeisthai*. The use of this vocabulary reflects an important but unrecognized assumption that has rarely been questioned, then or since: that prudential and epistemic[48] rationality, practical and theoretical reason, are the exercises of a single principle or at least spring from a common source.

The conceptual development of the notion of reason is closely tied to the history of its terminology, but the two do not coincide. Although Democritus has no unambiguous term for "reason" as a mode of cognition, he has defined the concept unambiguously by a negative feature, its contrast to sense perception. Given the global notion of cognition as information and belief about the world, rational knowledge is identified as that kind of cognition that is not directly dependent on the anatomy of the sense organs. It is important to note here that, because of their natural basis in the human body, the enumeration of the five senses reports a plain matter of fact, like the shape of the earth or the explanation of a solar eclipse. Hence, when the senses are enumerated, whether by Democritus or by some unknown predecessor, the job is done once and for all: the five senses are the same for us as for Democritus. And insofar as the notion of rational cognition is defined negatively, by its distinction from sense perception as in Democritus B 11 and 125, the reference of this concept is fixed with equal definiteness, even though the terminology for it is still fluctuating.

When we turn from cognition to motivation and look for a neat contrast between reason and passion to match that between reason and sense perception, we find nothing of the sort. For here there is no natural or secure basis for marking off the domain of emotion, feeling, and affect, nothing that can correspond to the anatomical delineation of the

[48]Note that *epistasthai*, the verb from which we have the term *epistēmē* for (scientific) knowledge, originally indicated the practical mastery of a subject matter, the know-how that is characteristic of an overseer or supervisor (*epistatēs*) who "stands over" the task to be performed by virtue of his skill (*epistamenos*).

senses.[49] The ordinary, pre-theoretical notion of reason is not defined by a contrast with emotion at all but by the opposition between acting reasonably or foolishly, with foresight or without. This practical notion of rationality is then given an entirely new content by the philosophers (beginning with Heraclitus and Parmenides) who develop a notion of mind or intelligence as a theoretical capacity to understand the nature of things. It is this notion which Democritus has identified by the contrast with sense perception. And once he has done so, the concept of mind or reason is in a state of creative fermentation and confusion. It will have to be clarified by a systematic account of the parts or faculties of the psyche, in which the epistemic and prudential roles of reason are somehow distinguished and reconciled. That will be the work of Plato and Aristotle. But until this work is done, there is no basis for any clear contrast between reason and emotion. The general concept of emotion (or passion or affect) remains to be identified, and from the beginning its definition will be heavily theory-laden in a way that the identifying definition of sense-perception need not be. The classification of the emotions, and even the choice of a term for "emotion," will reflect some theory or model for conceptualizing the psyche. Hence, the absence of a combat between reason and passion in Democritus, to parallel the oppositions between reason and sense, body and soul, is more than an incidental fact about the use of metaphor in the fragments. Before Plato no one can describe such a conflict because no one has the conceptual equipment needed to refer to feeling, emotion, and affect in general terms, so as to set them over against the principle of reason. That is what we see emerging for the first time in the passage of the *Gorgias* where Plato speaks of "the part (or region) of the psyche where the desires are found" (493A3-B1).

It is the concept of desire with (as has been pointed out) the intimately connected concept of pleasure that plays the central role in what *we* may describe as Democritus' theory of the emotions. But this role reflects not so much a theoretical view as simply the facts of the case in our mental life. It is desire (and particularly the animal appetites) together with pleasure and pain as positive and negative states of feeling that come closest to providing a natural or objective point of reference for the realm of emotion and affect. Hence, Aristotle will on the one hand attempt to classify all sorts of motivational impulse under the head-

[49]As Amelie Rorty has put it, "emotions do not form a natural class" (in "Aristotle on the Metaphysical Status of the Passions," forthcoming in *RMeta*).

ing of "desire" (*orexis*), while on the other hand he offers a characterization of *pathos* ("affect") as "appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, affection (*philia*), hatred, yearning, jealousy, pity, and generally whatever is accompanied by pleasure or pain" (*NE* II.6, 1105^{b}21 ff.). In Democritus we find no comparable attempt at generalization.[50] Various emotions are mentioned, but there is little or nothing in the way of classification or conceptual unification. Aside from cheerfulness (*euthymiē*), pleasure and joy, pain and grief, and desire (see the Appendix), all of which occur frequently, the fragments refer separately to:

fear (*phobos* B 268; cf. 41, 297; *deima* 199, 215; *dedoika* 174, 205, 206; cf. *hyperdedoika* 278)
confidence, fearlessness (*tharsos, athambiē* 215, 216, 258)
boldness (in bad sense: *thrasos* 254)
hope (*elpis* 185, 221, 287, 292; cf. 58)
shame or respect (*aidōs, aideisthai, aischynesthai* 179, 244, 264; cf. 84)
admiration (*thaumazein* 191)
envy (*phthonos* 191, 245; cf. 88)
jealousy (*zēlos* 191)
ill-will (*dysmeniē* 191)
goodwill (*eunoia* 268)
friendship, affection (*philia* 186; cf. 103, etc.)
hatred (*stygeein* 199)
contentiousness (*philonikia* 237, 252)

It is probably an accident that sexual desire (*erōs*), greed (*pleonexia*), and regret (*metameleia*) are attested only in the Demokrates collection.[51]

[50]There is only an apparent exception in B 31 (from Clement): "according to Democritus, medicine cures diseases of the body, but wisdom rids the soul of passions (*pathē*)." Although this probably does reflect something Democritus said, the phraseology is certainly Clement's. (The idea of rhetoric or philosophy as medicine for the soul is a common one, echoed for example by Socrates in the *Hippias Minor* 372 E7 ff.: "you will do me much greater good by ridding my soul of ignorance than by ridding my body of disease"; and compare the *technē alypias* in Antiphon A 6 with Guthrie's comment, *History* III, 290.) *Pathos* in the sense of "emotion, affect" is introduced by Aristotle as a technical term (*NE* 1105^{b}21, cited above; cf. Bonitz, *Index* 557^{a}41 ff.); in Plato and earlier writers it simply means "experience" or "what happens to one." Clement's formula actually presupposes the Stoic definition of *pathos* as an excessive or harmful affect that reason should eliminate. Democritus cannot have meant that wisdom should eliminate *emotions*, since the desirable condition of cheerfulness (*euthymiē*) is itself an emotional state.

[51]B 73, 86, 43 (cf. *metanoein* in B 66).

Except for the allegorical reference to three negative emotions as "plagues" (*kēres*) in B 191, the fragments show no trace of any larger grouping or classification. As noted, there is at best a first glimmer of the notion of a combat between reason and emotion in B 236 and 290.

8. *Democritus' conception of the good life*

This discussion has not focused on Democritus' originality as a thinker but rather on the evidence of the fragments for the stage that psychological reflection had reached in the generation before Plato's dialogues. In many respects, Democritus has appeared here simply as the spokesman for his age: in the parallelism of body and soul, in the depiction of psychic conflict, in the conception of the psyche as locus for happiness and misery, character and emotion, and in making use of a notion of rationality that is both prudential and epistemic. In other respects, he seems to have achieved greater clarity in the formulation of ideas that other authors must have prepared: in the conception of the psyche as master and user of the body, in the intimate link between pleasure and desire, above all in the sharp distinction between sense perception and some more adequate type of cognition. A full account of Democritus' original contribution to moral psychology would have to include his conception of happiness as *euthymiē* and his use of pleasure as a criterion. However, my understanding of Democritus' treatment of pleasure differs so greatly from the usual view that I can only offer here a few grounds for dissent.

An extreme version of the standard view was recently formulated by Gosling and Taylor:

> He (Democritus) attempted to ground his moralizing in a systematic ethical theory. . . . He explicitly laid down a test or criterion to be applied in deciding questions of conduct, that criterion being fixed by consideration of an ultimate aim or purpose in human life. The achievement of that aim was the supreme good, and human conduct and things which human beings use were to be judged good or bad in so far as they tended to help or hinder the achievement of it. . . . Democritus saw the aim of life as the achievement of a state of tranquillity rather than as a life of pleasure as it would commonly be recognized, and thus anticipated the central doctrine of Epicurean ethics . . . [but, like the Epicureans, he thought] that the life of tranquillity is the pleasantest life.[52]

[52]Gosling and Taylor, pp. 29-31.

To assign to Democritus an ethical theory of this kind is to take for granted the notion of a *telos* or supreme good, the unifying goal of human life "for the sake of which everything else is chosen," a notion gradually elaborated by Plato in the dialogues and systematized by Aristotle in his *Ethics*. Now this notion is explicitly presupposed by the Hellenistic doxography that we find reflected in Cicero, Arius Didymus, Diogenes Laertius, and Clement, where Democritus' view is assimilated to the *telos* theories of post-Aristotelian moral philosophy.[53] But we need not follow the doxographers in attributing the Hellenistic concept of *telos* to a pre-Platonic moralist.[54] An unprejudiced reading of the fragments does not support the view that Democritus' ethical thought is dominated by the pursuit of any single goal. And insofar as one principal preoccupation can be discerned throughout the fragments, it is a concern for the role of reason in human life—that is, for the extent to which thoughtful judgment and careful reflection can protect us against the uncertainties of fortune on the one hand and self-inflicted grief on the other. Here moral philosophy is a guide to life not by telling us how to decide what is right or what is expedient but by increasing the share of reason and hence of autonomy in our experience of good and evil, joy and grief. The term *autarkeia*, "independence, self-sufficiency," is as conspicuous in the fragments as is *euthymiē*,[55] and Democritus might almost be regarded as a precursor of the Stoics rather than of the Epicureans.

Seen in his own time, however, the natural point of comparison is with Socrates. Like Socrates, Democritus has an "inner" conception of happiness, located in the psyche rather than in possessions or in the esteem shown to you by others. And as for Socrates, this inner peace and comfort rests for Democritus too upon the consciousness of a life lived

[53]DK A 169, 167, 1.45, and B 4. Note the appropriate caveat of Bailey: the end (*telos*) "is the conception of a later age and implies a far more logically worked-out system of ethics" (*The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, pp. 190 f.).

[54]For a justified protest against this misreading of Democritus, see Langerbeck (note 25 above) 56–75: Democritus' thought is focused on the notion of security (*asphaleia*) and stability (*mēketi metapiptein*); but "nothing points to *euthymiē* as systematic center for a scientific ethics" (p. 60). We may add that even Epicurean theory was probably not as rigorously consequentialist as Gosling and Taylor would suggest for Democritus, with all judgments of good and bad based solely on the contribution to the final goal as in Utilitarian theory. Certainly Aristotle's own ethics is not "teleological" in this sense.

[55]For *autarkēs*, see B 176, 210; the thought without the word is there in 119 and 146. Cf. B 234 (the power of health is in ourselves). Hence the importance of *ponos* and *mathēsis*. And see below on *aidōs*: the standard for conduct is also in ourselves, not in the eyes of others.

according to *aretē* or moral excellence. Again, as with Socrates, Democritus' conception of excellence is a unified one in which the "quiet" or cooperative virtues of justice and temperance occupy center stage and determine the content of more "competitive" excellences like courage (see, e.g., B 214). More than Socrates, however, Democritus is prepared to recommend the virtues for their role in making one's life agreeable: "*sōphrosynē* increases one's delights and makes pleasure greater" (B 211). Pleasure and grief, joy and joylessness, may thus be invoked as "the boundary mark (*ouros*) of what is advantageous and disadvantageous" (B 4, 188). Here Democritus reminds us of Socrates' unexpected hedonism at the end of the *Protagoras*.[56] But other texts are difficult to reconcile with hedonism, even with the measured hedonism of the *Protagoras*: "one should not choose all pleasure but pleasure in what is noble (*to kalon*)" (B 207); the brave man must "prevail over pleasures" (B 214); the soul debauches the body "by indulgence in pleasure" (*philēdoniai*, B 159); it is from such pleasures that wickedness is produced (*kakotēs*, B 178). Democritus' attitude to pleasure seems rather like that of Aristotle: "our whole study and pursuit of virtue must be concerned with pleasures and pains; for someone who deals with these well will be a good man, but he who deals with them badly will himself be bad" (*NE* II.3, 1105ᵃ10). And just as Aristotle holds the life of virtue and *eudaimonia* to be the most pleasant life, so does Democritus insist on the positive experience of joy or "cheerfulness" which marks success in living a rational life and which can serve as a guide in the choice of particular pleasures: "the best thing for a man will be to live his life with as much joy (*euthymeisthai*) as possible and as little grief. And this will be, if he does not take his pleasures in things mortal" (*ta thnēta*, B 189)[57] — for example, in the fleeting pleasures of the belly (B 235).

As Vlastos has pointed out, the hedonism of B 189 — that is, the pursuit of cheerfulness and the avoidance of grief — is not so much a new philosophical doctrine as the expression of a widespread view, shared by the poets and by the medical writers, that joy is the natural feeling of health and vitality whereas joylessness, grief, and pain are the marks of

[56]The parallel to the *Protagoras* in often drawn, e.g., by Guthrie (note 4 above) 494.

[57]The authenticity of B 189 has been doubted by Claus (p. 148n) on insufficient grounds. (B 235 on the brevity and futility of sensual pleasure can show what Democritus meant by *ta thnēta*.) The language here seems to me much more convincingly Democritean than in the Demokrates aphorism B 37, which describes the goods of the psyche as "more divine" than those of the body.

death and disease.[58] Here again, Democritus is performing the pre-theoretical role of articulating in general terms a popular view of pleasure, which Plato will then develop as a systematic theory in the *Protagoras*. The hedonism that Socrates expounds in the *Protagoras* is not Democritus' view, and it is not the view of "the many" either, since they do not formulate philosophical theories. But it would not be inaccurate to see Democritus here as the intermediate stage between the inarticulate hedonism of common sense and popular literature, on the one hand, and the philosophical hedonism of the *Protagoras* on the other.

That pleasure as such cannot be the final consideration for Democritus is best seen in what is probably the most original feature of his ethical doctrine, his remarks about shame and self-respect. Whereas Socrates' appeal is ultimately to reason or cognition, to the judgment of "one who has knowledge" and to "the *logos* which seems best upon reflection" (*Crito* 47D ff., 46B), Democritus' appeal is to an inner standard that is less principled and more personal: "Do not feel more shame before men than before yourself; be no more willing to do evil if no one is to find out than if all men are to know. But show respect above all before yourself and establish this law for your soul, so as to do no unseemly act" (B 264). The phrase *heōuton aideisthai* means both to show yourself respect and to be ashamed in your own eyes.[59] The force of this expression can only be understood in the light of the traditional shame standard of Greek morality, which is here stood on its head. In place of the hero's code, which identifies his self-respect with his status in the eyes of others, Democritus proposes an inner "law for the psyche" that is an almost literal anticipation of Kant's notion of the moral law as autonomy or self-legislation. The Democritean sage is a free spirit, traditionalist in many respects, dissident in others (for example, on begetting children and on concern for the afterlife). For morality as for happiness, his standard is internal: "the psyche is the dwelling place of the *daimōn*." The *daimōn* is, traditionally, the divine power that assigns good or bad fortune; for Democritus, the human being is himself largely responsible for this outcome. In the notion of the indwelling *daimōn* as in the notion of self-

[58]See Vlastos (pp. 586 f.).

[59]For a parallel comment on self-shame and self-respect, see B 244 with B 84. B 179 emphasizes the role of shame in moral education: *to aideisthai*, "the greatest support of *aretē*." Shame before others is the training and propaedeutic for the final stage of shame before oneself. The importance of *aidōs* for Democritus again reminds us of Plato's *Protagoras*, where *aidōs* and *dikē* are presented (in the Prometheus myth) as the basis of social morality.

respect (rather than in his looser, less coherent notion of the psyche), Democritus might claim to have made the first attempt at a philosophical formulation of the concept of the self.[60]

Appendix: Democritus' References to Desire

The fragments make regular use of two terms for desire: *orexis, oregomai* (six occurrences) and *epithymiē, epithymeein* (five occurrences). Other verbs occur more rarely.

I. *Orexis, oregomai*

B 72 (Demokrates): Violent *orexeis* for one thing blind the soul for other things.

201. Fools desire (*oregontai*) long life without enjoying the length of their life.

202. Fools desire (*oregontai*) what is absent, but they waste what is present, which is more profitable than things which are past.

205. Fools desire (*oregontai*) life in fearing death.

219. Desire (*orexis*) for money, if it is not limited by satiety, is much harder to bear than extreme poverty. For greater desires (*orexeis*) produce greater needs.

284. If you do not desire (*epithymeis*) many things, a few things will seem many to you. For small desire (*orexis*) makes poverty as strong as wealth.

II. *Epithymia, epithymeein*

70. (Demokrates): Immoderate desire (*epithymein*) is the mark of the child, not of a man.

191. Human beings achieve cheerfulness by moderation in enjoyment (*metriotēti terpsios*) and a measured balance (*symmetria*) in their life . . . . You should observe the lives of those who are in distress . . . so that you will no longer suffer evil in your soul by desiring (*epithymeonti*) more than you have . . . . ⟨The person who admires those who are more fortunate⟩ is obliged always to try for something new from the desire (*epithymia*) to do something irremediable and against the law.

[60]For some pre-Democritean reflection on the self, see Heraclitus frs. 101 and 116 (Diels) with my comment, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 116.

224. The desire (*epithymia*) for more spoils what one has, like the dog in Aesop's fable (who dropped its bone reaching for its reflection).
234. By failure of self-mastery (*akrasiē*) they betray the cause of health to their desires (*epithymiai*). (For full text, see above, p. 16.)
235. [The pleasures of the belly are brief. . . .] For this kind of desire (*epithymein*) is always present for the same things, and when they get what they desire (*epithymeousi*), the pleasure is quickly past. . . . (For full text, see above, p. 16.)
284. See above, under *orexis*.

III. *Other expressions for desire or preference*

A. *Ephiesthai* B 73 (Demokrates, and unusually suspicious): Legitimate eros is striving after (*ephiesthai*) handsome objects (boys?) without doing them violence.

B. *Himeiresthai* B 223. The body does not long for (*himeiretai*) things that require toil and trouble and make life painful. (See fuller text below under *chrēizein*.)

C. *Ethelein*

199. Fools who hate life want (*ethelousi*) to live from fear of Hades.
206. Fools want (*ethelousin*) to grow old because they fear death.
(Note: The formula in 199 and 206 is parallel to that in B 201, 202, 205, where we have *oregontai* instead of *ethelousin*.)

D. *Chrēizein*

223. What the body requires (*chrēizei*) is easily available to all without toil and trouble; as for those things that require (*chrēizei*) toil and trouble and make life painful, it is not the body that longs for these but the ill grasp of the mind.

E. *Diōkein*

203. Human beings pursue (*diōkousin*) death in fleeing from it. (Note: The formula parallels that with *oregontai* and *ethelousin*: see above on B 206.)

The various verbs seem almost interchangeable and require no comment. However, the nominalizations (*orexis* and *epithymia*) become subjects in turn for a different verb and thus take on the literary color of a slight personification: desires make the soul blind (B 72) or produce

needs (B 219); moderate desire strengthens poverty (284), as desire for more ruins what one has (224). This personification of desire follows the normal pattern in Democritus and other authors for abstract terms formed by nominalization of the corresponding verb.

Note that *orexis* is desire for wealth in 219 and 284; *epithymein* refers to sensual desires ("the belly") in 235 and probably in 234. Since both nouns occur in the same context in 284, Democritus is not likely to have intended any substantial difference between the two terms. The verbs are slightly more vivid and perhaps more individual: there probably persists an etymological connotation of "reaching out for" in *oregomai* and "having one's heart (*thymos*) set upon" in *epithymeein*.

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